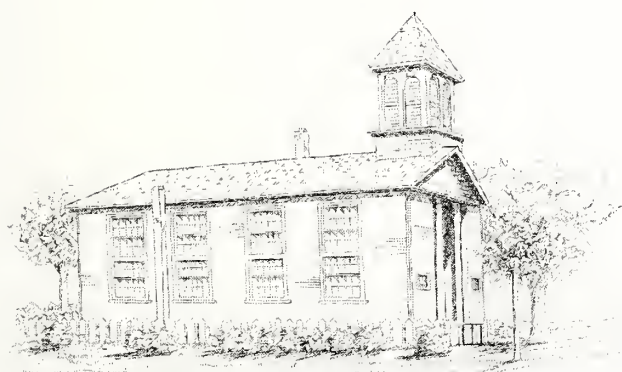
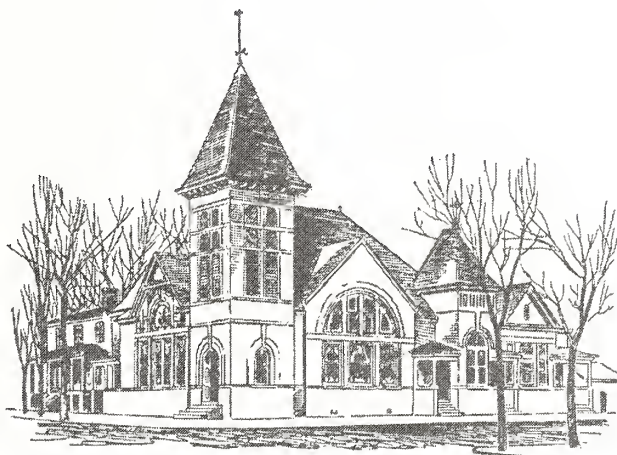


# To Worship, Work and Witness: A Brief History of Oxford Baptist Church



1848 — 1896



1896 — 1925



1970 —

1998 —

1928 —

Oxford, North Carolina

---



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/toworshipworkwit00wash>





*Dedicated to the Saints, Sinners, and All in Between  
who have worshiped and found Christian Fellowship at  
Oxford Baptist Church*









## Foreword

Penning a history for a church with as rich a background as Oxford Baptist, while certainly rewarding, is a humbling and at times daunting undertaking. So as to maintain a focus and not go totally adrift, this sketch was written based on the premise that any worthwhile institutional history should attempt at least two goals: (1) to provide the reader with a working history of the organization; and (2) to give a sense of how that history relates to and interacts with the present. For better or worse, this brief account aspires to both these goals.

Even a cursory glance through the records of Oxford Baptist Church reveals that since the church's inception in 1848, Oxford Baptist has been very blessed. The church has thrived and at times narrowly survived because of the work of the saints of successive generations, including the present. Throughout Oxford Baptist Church's history scores of individuals have faithfully taken part in the work of the church in a number of capacities: officers, deacons, committee members, teachers, choir members and regular attendees. Members have constantly labored and given generously and sacrificially in support of the church's upkeep and in furtherance of her mission and work. To attempt to give any meaningful account of all of these individuals would quickly turn this brief sketch into an unwieldy tome and a writing that would undoubtedly always remain incomplete. It is, therefore, not at all within the scope of this brief history to try to acknowledge or render an account of the many saints who have so faithfully labored to sustain and serve Oxford Baptist Church and her mission.

Hopefully, this sketch does, however, provide a brief overview of the major transitions that the church has undergone throughout her history. Though walls and windows do not a church make, this account has an emphasis on the various physical structures used by Oxford Baptist Church. Discussing these structures with some insights as to how the buildings were used, hopefully, creates a twist on the old adage and form not only follows but in retrospect serves to convey something about function. Thereby, this history may provide some sense of how life at Oxford Baptist Church has evolved since 1848.

In furtherance of the second goal as stated in the first paragraph, this sketch provides an emphasis on the present. A 1927 *Year Book and Directory* reveals that in that year, Oxford Baptist Church had an entirely different committee structure, different Sunday school organization and as one would certainly expect, a different staff—then consisting solely of the pastor. A number of other groups within the church have evolved or changed names as well since that year. For example the young girl's mission study group, which was formerly Sunbeams, is now G.A.'s (Girl's in Action). This history's slight emphasis on the present is by no means an attempt to devalue the past and those who labored and worshiped at Oxford Baptist Church in former days. Without these individuals, the church would not be what it is today. Nevertheless, the present is covered in more depth for two reasons: first as an attempt to document the way things are, for they will surely change; second, and more importantly, to introduce the present church to new members and convey ways that they can become a part of the current work and mission of Oxford Baptist Church.

BX  
6480  
095  
W37  
2005

*To Worship Work and Witness : A Brief History of Oxford Baptist Church* was co-authored in 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 by S. Royster Washington and J. Yancey Washington on behalf of the church Historial Committee and is an extension of earlier church histories compiled by The Reverend Robert I. Devin in 1897, Chief Justice William A. Devin, completed in 1948, and T. S. Royster, Sr., completed in 1973. This writing is not a professional history, for it does not contain the appropriate citations. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to be as accurate as possible. In preparing this extension to those earlier histories, the authors have gleaned further information from the church archives; *The Francis B. Hayes Collection* and *Edith Howell Wheeler Collection* at the Richard H. Thornton Library; Wake Forest University's *North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection*; *The Biblical Recorder*; other writings as cited herein; as well as conversations and correspondence with church and community members to whom the authors are most grateful.

The cover is a compilation of a sketch of the first church by Leslie H. Johnson done in 2004, a sketch of the second church as found in the December 8, 1897, edition of *The Biblical Recorder*, and an edited version of the conceptualized rendition of the present church facilities created just prior to the construction of Church Family Center. The pictures included in this history came from the church archives and several of the more recent photographs came from the extensive collection of Al Overby.

#### The Historial Committee

S. Royster Washington, Chairman

Nancy O. Blackwell  
Sylvia C. Matthews  
Wilma D. Preddy

Dorothy G. Pruitt  
Richard M. Sumrell

Isabel R. Washington, Church Clerk/Historian  
Ex-Officio Member

Published: 2005

## Contents

I.	The Community And The First Church: Getting Started	1
II.	The Beginning of Oxford Baptist Church W.M.U	5
III.	Selling the First Church & Settling on a Name	6
IV.	The Second Church: Moving to Main Street	8
V.	Life in the Second Church	10
VI.	Parsons and Parsonages	13
VII.	The Third and Present Church Building	15
VIII.	1930's through the 1960's	16
IX.	Trading for the Post Office	20
X.	Events of the 1970's	23
XI.	Major Repairs /Expenditures of the 1980's	24
XII.	Church Staff Changes of the 1980's	25
XIII.	Church Family Center	26
XIV.	Major Expenditures in the Twenty-first Century	29
XV.	Adoption of a Core Values Statement	30
XVI.	Honorariums & Memorials	30
XVII.	The Ministry, Missions & Leadership	31
XVIII.	Ministers of Education /Associate Pastors	32
XIX.	The Music Ministry	33
XX.	The Present Church	38
XXI.	Conclusion	44
	Covenant of Oxford Baptist Church	46
	Oxford Baptist Church Core Values Statement	47







## I. The Community And The First Church: Getting Started

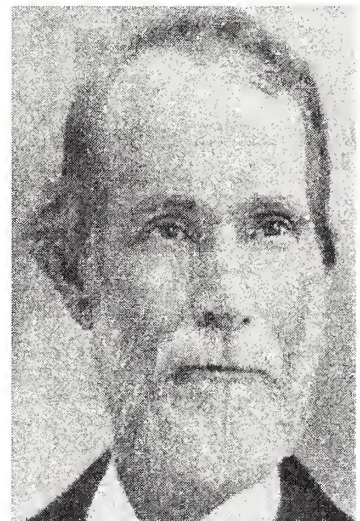
From the earliest days of settlement in the region, the fertile soil of Northern Granville County attracted people from Virginia and Eastern North Carolina, and the area's colonial population steadily increased during the period leading to the Revolutionary War. Among these early settlers were Baptist. One of the first Baptist churches in the area was Grassy Creek Baptist Church, which is thought to have been established prior to 1754.

Samuel Benton's plantation, "Oxford," was designated as the county seat for Granville County in 1764. However, it took some time for a community to develop around this site. The Town of Oxford officially began in 1811 when the North Carolina legislature authorized Granville County to purchase fifty acres around the courthouse from Thomas Littlejohn. This fifty acres was subdivided and sold. Five years later there were enough inhabitants in the community to justify the Town of Oxford's becoming incorporated. Several of the town's churches, including the Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopal were established shortly thereafter, but not Oxford Baptist.

Though there were a number of Baptists in Granville County, by the mid-1840's there was still no Baptist Church in Oxford. This fact drew the attention of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention. In 1846 the Board of the State Convention appointed The Reverend Robert Irah Devin, a native of Virginia, to establish a Baptist church within the town. With this charge, Devin arrived in Oxford on November 1, 1846.

At the time of Devin's arrival, Granville County's population was around seventeen thousand, and Oxford, at that time the sixth largest town in North Carolina, had a population of approximately seven hundred. Yet Devin was only able to identify six Baptists within the town interested in establishing a church: five women and one man. An additional challenge for the small group was finding a suitable place to worship. The courthouse was deemed unfit and initially they did not seem to have many other options. Under the leadership of The Reverend Jacob Doll, Oxford Presbyterian Church allowed the newly formed Baptist group to use their church for two services a month. This arrangement continued for almost two years.

In order to raise the funds necessary to erect a church, the congregation circulated a subscription list, but the funds pledged were inadequate. Help for the struggling band came through the generosity of Rhodes N. Herndon. Herndon, who was Oxford's first Post Master, was not a Baptist, but was a member of a wealthy family who collectively had involvements in a number of early Oxford business ventures. He was also the brother



**The Rev. Robert I. Devin in his later years. As a young man, Devin served as the founding minister of Oxford Baptist Church. His wife, Cynthia Herndon Devin, was instrumental in establishing the church's W.M.U.**



of Cynthia Herndon, who later married Devin. Herndon offered to take the subscriptions pledged, large or small, and build a suitable house of worship for the congregation. He donated \$2,000.00 toward the cause and later donated the land as well.

The first church was located on the north side of Front Street in the block between Main and Gilliam Streets. Construction was begun in 1847 and completed in July, 1848. Almost two years after Devin's arrival, on September 2, 1848, Oxford Baptist Church was duly organized by Dr. Jeremiah Bell Jeter, representing the Flat River Association, and The Reverend Robert I. Devin. Dr. William Hooper, President of Wake Forest College, preached the sermon for the occasion.<sup>1</sup> The initial fifteen members were as follows:

*Ianna Burnett*  
*Cynthia R. Devin*  
*Robert I. Devin*  
*Margaret Grice*  
*Nancy P. Hester*  
*Rebecca Hester*  
*Susan A. Hester*  
*Louisa House*

*William Hunter*  
*Asa C. Parham*  
*Assenath Parham*  
*Judith Parham*  
*Louisa M. Parham*  
*Williamston Parham*  
*Anne Whittimore*

At the first conference, Devin was chosen pastor. He continued in this position for nine years.

On October 10, 1849, Herndon deeded to the "Trustees of the religious society or congregation of the Baptist Church in the town of Oxford in the County of Granville known as the Oxford Baptist Church" the lot on which he had erected the first church "for the purpose of promoting the cause of religion in the said congregation." The consideration was ten shillings or approximately \$1.67. In the language of the first pastor:

The little band labored and sacrificed amid difficulties and discouragements, neither asking nor receiving pecuniary aid from any Board after the church was organized. Trusting in God for help we pressed forward, increasing in membership and strength. In the course of a few years the church grew in numbers from 15 to 80. The Lord was with us. He is still with us, and has promised to be with us to the end.

A newspaper clipping from September 7, 1848, describes Oxford Baptist Church's beginning and first structure:

The new church which has been erected in Oxford is quite a spacious building, forty by sixty feet, including portico, with gallery, all well painted

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. William Hooper bore the same name as his grandfather, who was one of North Carolina's three signers of the Declaration of Independence. Many of Oxford Baptist Church's early ministers were educated at Wake Forest College, which at the time was located in adjacent Wake County and was the closest Baptist seminary and institution of higher learning for men.



and cost three thousand dollars. It is quite an ornament to the village. [The] Rev. R. I. Devin, late missionary for the Flat River Association, has been selected as their pastor.

In a May 7, 1920 *Oxford Public Ledger* article, Mrs. E. C. Peace describes this first church based on her childhood memories and compares the building to the second structure on Main Street which housed the congregation at the time of her description:

The pulpit was ascended by steps with a bench for seats instead of the luxurious chairs which at present adorn its rostrum, and convenient reading desk for its Bible and hymn book. There was no organ or musical instrument. Mr. Titus Grandy led the singing, using a tuning fork for guidance in pitching the first note, and he sat on the second bench near the pulpit. His wife carried a small foot stool to warm her feet. The room was heated by two large stoves and not always comfortable.

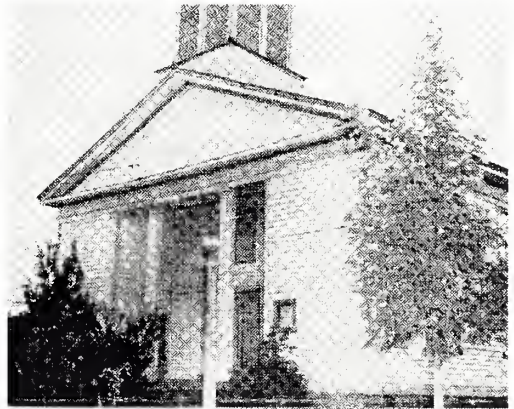
The ladies occupied seats on the right side, the men on the left. There was no vestibule and two doors for entrance. If a young lady had a gentleman escort she parted from him at the door and rejoined him outside when services were ended. A gallery for colored people ran the length of two sides of the house... Then there were no Sunday School rooms but classes were heard with a few benches intervening. Protracted meetings were sometimes held and seekers after salvation invited to the mourner's bench.

Mrs. Nonie Crawford presided for many years over the first cabinet organ used, helped in the singing by a few young girls. She and her mother were indefatigable in their zeal for the church and all its interests, seeing that the bell was rung at proper time, the sacramental elements provided, the fires made, carpet strips for the aisles furnished. They never allowed any engagements to conflict with the weekly prayer meetings...

The church bell was outside in a high latticed wooden belfry from which a long rope dangled, convenient for fun loving boys to hang on to, and ring out the joyous news of a Christmas morning.

There were no Quarterlies or Sunday School papers but scholars learning hymns and portions of the Bible...

While this original church did have a baptistry, it did not have a well until 1888. As



**One of the few pictures of the structure, which was located on Front Street and served as the first home for Oxford Baptist Church from 1848 until 1896.**

was common with many town structures of its day, this first church building was surrounded by a white picket fence for the purpose of preventing the livestock which could occasionally be found roaming the town from entering the churchyard. Horse racks provided a place for hitching horses while members attended services.

In this first church building, Oxford Baptist Church hosted meetings of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention on two occasions; first in 1849, a year after the church's establishment and then again in 1879. While by today's standards early Oxford Baptist Church was a small congregation, hosting two state conventions would seem to indicate that Oxford Baptist was at least a moderate-sized church in comparison to other Baptist churches of the era.

Church records from Oxford Baptist Church's first thirty-three years are missing, a tragic loss considering that records from this period would likely have provided insight into how Oxford Baptist grew and evolved during her formative years. Additionally, records from this period would have provided insight into how the church functioned in the antebellum period, the Civil War and subsequent occupation of the Reconstruction Era. Surely these national events personally affected many members of Oxford Baptist Church. A great number of Granville County men fought in the Civil War. Regiments from General William T. Sherman's Union armies camped out overnight within the Town of Oxford less than a half a mile from Oxford Baptist Church following that army's infamous and destructive march from Atlanta to the Sea and subsequent course through South Carolina to Raleigh. Certainly this would have had ramifications for many members of Oxford Baptist Church and possibly the church herself. As no church records survive, all that can accurately be said is that Oxford Baptist Church existed and functioned throughout these periods.

The church's oldest surviving minutes do, however, begin with a church conference on September 18, 1881. These minutes reflect such oddities and transactions as the August, 1882, purchase of spittoons for the church at a cost of \$8.98, and the deacons' instructing the pastor in November of 1884 to request that the congregation not defile the church by using tobacco and spitting on the floor.

Minutes reflect that prior to 1889, deacons would routinely divide the town in to quadrants, along an axis as created by Hillsboro/Williamsboro Streets and College/Main Streets and would then call on church members in their respective sections for money to support the pastor's salary. In January of 1889, the deacons recommended that this method of calling on members be replaced with a system whereby worshipers would bring donations to church in envelopes and place their contributions in small tin boxes which were to be attached to each church bench. The church approved this recommendation, and so began the use of envelopes for collecting money at Oxford Baptist Church.

Early Oxford Baptist Church minutes also reflect some unpleasant matters as well, namely the "withdrawal of fellowship," meaning the removal of a member's name from all church rolls. These matters are interesting and are included here simply for the limited insights which they provide as to the dynamics of town and church life around this period. In the 1880's like any town of its size, Oxford had a number of saloons. If

a member were caught frequenting one of these establishments, he could soon expect a visit from a deacon, who would in turn notify the individual that he was to appear before the Board of Deacons, explain his actions and REPENT! If the member failed to appear or give a satisfactory explanation for his behavior, fellowship was withdrawn. Women were not exempt from these policies, and fellowship was withdrawn for other reasons as well. As late as 1915, the deacon minutes reflect occurrences such as “a report recommended the withdrawal of fellowship of Miss -----<sup>1</sup> on account of unchristian conduct, report adopted and fellowship withdrawn.” Apparently moral transgressions were not the only reason for withdrawing fellowship. If a member did not financially support the church, the deacons would send the individual a letter. If this correspondence prompted no response, a committee was sent to solicit the individual’s contribution or find out why the member refused to pay for the support of the church. If the reasons were not found to be suitable, fellowship could be withdrawn in these instances as well.

Most of the records reflecting withdrawal of fellowship are no more detailed than the above entry of 1915, simply citing “unchristian conduct” as the motivating cause. Such entries offer little context and no real attempt at a detailed explanation or rendering of circumstances leading up to these actions. Today withdrawal of fellowship would certainly be a most drastic church action and would probably be considered by many to be “unchristian conduct” in and of itself. However, viewed in a light most favorable to the congregation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these actions may be seen as harsh steps, which the congregation of a still relatively young church felt were necessary to insure that Baptists were properly represented within the community and that the church maintained the funds necessary for her survival. In a larger context, instances of such church measures are not unique to Oxford Baptist Church. Since the beginning of Christian history and the establishment of an organized church, individuals have been excommunicated, or cut off from the church, for various reasons. However these actions were justified and carried out within the context of their time—withdrawal of fellowship did not occur often and apparently did not discourage too many from joining Oxford Baptist Church. Throughout this period the church continued to prosper and add to her membership.

## II. The Beginning of Oxford Baptist Church W.M.U.

The Woman’s Missionary Union (W.M.U.) of the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1888. Three years later on February 27, 1891, thirteen women, sitting at the fireside of Mrs. James M. Currin,<sup>2</sup> organized the Woman’s Missionary Society of Oxford Baptist Church. Cynthia R. Devin was the first president. Fifteen new members joined the first year. Following its inception, the W.M.U. continued to grow

---

<sup>1</sup> The individual’s name was intentionally omitted from this history. The complete record, however, can be found in the church minutes.

<sup>2</sup> The James M. Currin house sits on High Street at the head of Raleigh Street.



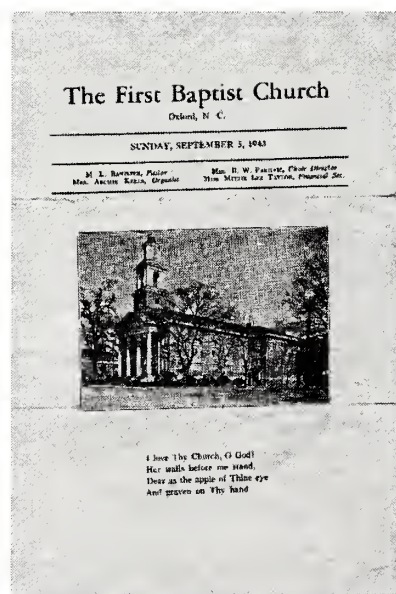
and to become an important organization within Oxford Baptist Church. By March 25, 1921, an issue of *The Orphans' Friend*, a newspaper published by the Masons at Oxford Orphanage, referred to the active women of Oxford Baptist Church at that time: "The missionary organizations are especially aggressive and efficient under the direction of the women of the church." W.M.U. continues to be an active group in the work of today's church.

### III. Selling the First Church & Settling on a Name

In November of 1896 after a severe storm leveled their church, the town's largest black Baptist congregation, presently known as First Baptist Church, purchased Oxford Baptist Church's initial building on Front Street and moved the wooden structure to a lot on the northwest corner of Granville and Front Streets.

According to oral tradition the name "First Baptist Church" was initially used by Oxford Baptist and was posted on a sign above the door on this first building. With the sale and relocation of this first church structure, the name—as above the door—went as well. In spite of this appealing story, a number of names were actually used to identify early Oxford Baptist Church. Deeds reflecting the church's various land transactions up until the second half of the twentieth century have referred to the church as "Oxford Baptist Church," "First Baptist Church" and even "Missionary Baptist Church," seemingly depending on the way the wind was blowing. O.W. Gray & Son's, 1882 map of the Town of Oxford uses the last of these names to label the structure on Front Street.

Ambiguity as to the church's name lingered well beyond the 1896 transfer of the



Sunday programs showing variations in Oxford Baptist Church's name. Other church documents show these variations as well.

initial building. Programs of Sunday worship services and other church created documents attest to this fact. All Sunday programs that remain in existence for services prior to January 9, 1927, state "Oxford Baptist Church." Yet programs from January 16, 1927 through September 26, 1954 read alternately "First Baptist Church" or "The First Baptist Church." Letterhead and minutes for what was almost a thirty year period beginning in late 1920's switch randomly between "Oxford Baptist" and "First Baptist." Based on these documents and recollections of some of the individuals who authored them, "First Baptist Church" and "Oxford Baptist Church" were used loosely and interchangeably up until the mid-1950's. At that point the church reverted to the name used prior to 1927, and "Oxford Baptist Church" finally stuck.

While the initial name of the church may forever be somewhat murky, the fate of the first structure is not. The congregation of First Baptist Church on Granville Street outgrew the wooden building as well and constructed the larger brick edifice which presently serves as that congregation's current house of worship. In 1942, the original wooden structure was sold to Robert G. Lassiter, an Episcopalian who purchased it for St. Cyprians, the black Episcopal church. Upon this second sale, the building was moved further south on Granville Street. In 1958, St. Cyprians demolished the structure to build their current building.



**A picture taken of the first church structure of Oxford Baptist Church prior to its demolition in 1958. At the time of this picture, demolition work had already begun on the steeple.**



#### IV. The Second Church: Moving to Main Street

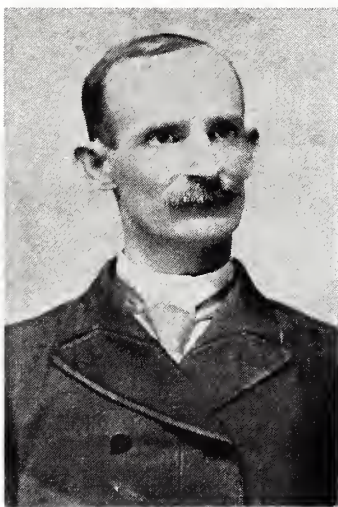
Forty-four years after her organization on March 29, 1892, having outgrown the first building, Oxford Baptist Church purchased the lot on the northeast corner of Main and Spring Streets from Lodge 396 of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons at a cost of \$1,500.00. In order to have enough land for the new church, additional property fronting on Main Street was purchased from Mrs. Sallie D. Easton for \$1,800.00. In contrast with the building of the first church which was facilitated in large part by the generosity of Rhodes N. Herndon, completing the second structure for Oxford Baptist Church, at a cost of \$17,000.00 was a slow, difficult process. In July 1892, at a ground breaking exercise, The Reverend Robert I. Devin cast a spade of dirt and construction was begun by the Hundley Brothers, a local contracting firm. Before this structure could be completed, with only the walls and roof raised, the economic depression which began in New York with the Wall Street panic of February, 1893, caused work to cease. The windows and the doors of the half-built structure were boarded up. In January, 1895, at a prayer meeting, J.C. Hundley came before the congregation and urged the group to resume work. Hundley stated that he would suffer severe financial hardship if the church did not follow through with the contract. The group voted, largely on faith, to proceed with construction and agreed that if upon completion the money was not available, Hundley could advertise and sell the building. At a prayer meeting in

February when discussion began concerning raising the \$1,300.00 needed to complete the building, James M. Currin stood and said he would see that the contractor was paid in full.

On August 2, 1896, Dr. John S. Hardaway presided over the first service in the second home of Oxford Baptist Church. The church debt for this building was paid in December of 1900, almost six and a half years after construction was begun. The new church was dedicated on December 30, 1900, and Hardaway composed the dedicatory hymn for the occasion.

This second church, built of brick in a Victorian Romanesque Revival style was an impressive structure and a big step forward for the congregation. An August 7, 1896 *Oxford Public Ledger* article describes the building as follows:

The church is built upon the plans so much now in use in the large cities, with the pulpit on the side instead of the end, so as to bring the minister nearer to the body of the congregation, with an



**Dr. John S. Hardaway, Minister of Oxford Baptist church from 1883—1904, presided over the first service in the second home of Oxford Baptist Church.**

inclined floor running from the pulpit to the opposite ends of the building, and seats arranged in a half circle, somewhat amphitheatre style. The Sunday School room is to the east of the main auditorium and connected with it by sliding doors, enabling the two rooms to be thrown into one, giving it a seating capacity of over 800.<sup>1</sup> The interior is finished in native pine, simply varnished, which gives a very bright appearance to the room.



**A postcard watercolor of Oxford Baptist Church's second church. This structure was located on the present church grounds on the northeast corner of Main and Spring Streets, and was built in a Victorian-Romanesque Revival style. The congregation completed and paid for this building in spite of the Depression of 1893. This church served as the home for Oxford Baptist Church from 1896 until 1925, when work was begun on the present church.**

However, as impressive as this new structure was, it was a building of its time and consequently lacked many modern amenities. A 1904 report reveals that at the time the cost of using oil lamps was \$42.00 a year, while operating sixty-nine electric lights

---

<sup>1</sup> This figure is likely inaccurate. The actual seating capacity of the second church was probably one-third this amount. The present main sanctuary seats approximately 428.



would cost \$50.00 annually. This estimate did not include the \$92.00 cost of fixtures and wiring. When presented with the cost, the church postponed installing electricity until 1906. Indoor plumbing was added in 1915, when the church voted to make this improvement prior to the town streets being paved, an event which would have caused the cost to subsequently rise.

## V. Life in the Second Church

By the end of the nineteenth century, Oxford Baptist Church had grown to such an extent that the congregation was able to look to matters beyond its own upkeep.



Attendees of the annual North Carolina Baptist State Convention in 1897 pose on Main Street in front of Oxford Baptist Church. This is the last time to date that Oxford Baptist has hosted the North Carolina Baptist State Convention. Two previous conventions were hosted in 1849 and 1879 and met in the first church on Front Street.



From the late 1890's through the beginning of the twentieth century, Oxford Baptist Church operated two mission Sunday Schools. In October of 1899, the church established the first of these schools about two miles from town in the Tabbs Creek vicinity. The minutes of the November 1, 1899, deacon's meeting reflect that there were "twenty-five scholars present" at this school the previous Sunday. In June of 1905, the deacons instructed the church clerk to report on the two mission Sunday schools located at Tabbs Creek and the Cotton Mill.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904, the church voted to purchase a new organ for \$2,000.00. Initial funds were raised for the purchase of this organ by ice cream and oyster suppers. After the organ's installation in November, 1904, eight hundred people attended the initial recital. In 1905, the church approved a recommendation by the deacons for the use of individual communion cups. Prior to this time communion was observed using a cruet and communal chalices. These items are presently on display in the Church Family Center.

From the end of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century, Oxford Baptist Church had young people from three town institutions regularly in attendance for Sunday services: children from Oxford Orphanage; students from Horner Military School, the all-male preparatory school which stood on present Military Street; and students from Oxford College, a Baptist college for women which stood on the east side of Raleigh Street between High and Henderson Streets.<sup>2</sup> It appears that on at least one occasion the convergence of these youthful groups under one common roof was the subject of some concern. The minutes of an August, 1911, deacons' meeting reflect that the President of Oxford College, Franklin P. Hobgood, who at the time was a deacon of Oxford Baptist Church and known throughout the state as a leading Baptist layman, requested that the congregation "reserve seats for the Horner



**This cruet and matching chalices were used in the second church. The cruet is engraved "Baptist Church Oxford, N.C. 1887."**

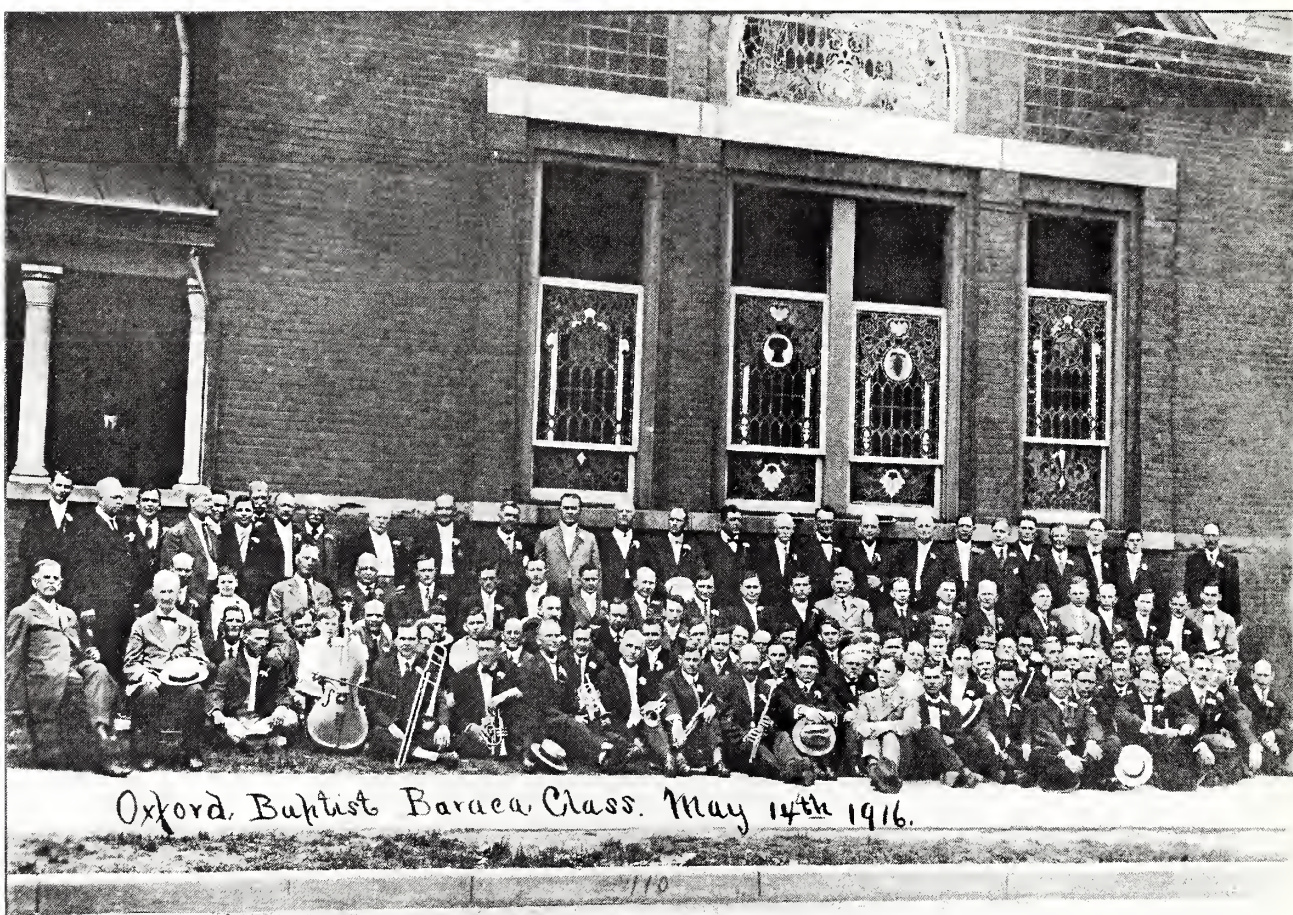
<sup>1</sup> The mission Sunday School at the Cotton Mill later evolved into West Oxford Baptist Church.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford College, initially established as "Oxford Female College" was opened under the auspices of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, and conceived as the women's counterpart to Wake Forest College. The college operated just over three quarters of a century, from 1851 to 1925, and had a number of distinguished faculty members including The Rev. Samuel Wait, D.D. as its first president. (Wait had previously served as the first president of Wake Forest College and is the namesake for the Wake Forest University's present chapel). The only remaining physical indications that this Baptist institution once flourished in Oxford are the state historical marker on the corner of Williamsboro and Lanier Streets and the remains of an entrance on Raleigh Street. For a more in depth history of Oxford Female College see Raymond Hargus Taylor's *Partners in Missions and Ministry: A History of Flat River Baptist Association* (1993), and The Granville County Historical Society's *Heritage and Homesteads: The History and Architecture of Granville County, North Carolina* (1986).



boys on the opposite side of the church” from his students. This request was presented to the President of Horner Military School and presumably satisfactorily addressed the concern, for it was never mentioned in the deacon’s minutes again.

Sunday school was a vital part of worship and fellowship for members of Oxford Baptist Church during this period. Among the various Sunday school groups the Baraca and Philanthea classes were particularly active. Baraca, a name alluding to the Hebrew word *Berachah*, meaning “blessing,” was first formed as a Bible study class for young men by Marshall A. Hudson in 1896 in Syracuse, New York. The class quickly spread across the nation and beyond and became an international, interdenominational group. The women’s counterpart, Philanthea, drew its name from the Greek words for “loving” and “truth.” Both Baraca and Philanthea Sunday schools classes remained active groups in Oxford Baptist throughout much of the twentieth century.



**Oxford Baptist Church Baraca Sunday School Class, May 14, 1916, posed in front of the second church building with instruments.**

In December of 1916, the church approved the election of deacons for staggered three-year terms. This system of deacon election remains in use today.

## VI. Parsons and Parsonages

Oxford Baptist Church has had twenty-one pastors:

<i>The Rev. Robert Irah Devin</i>	<i>1848-1857</i>
<i>The Rev. William Hill Jordan</i>	<i>1857-1858</i>
<i>The Rev. Moses Baldwin</i>	<i>1858-1859</i>
<i>The Rev. Elijah Forbes Beacham</i>	<i>1859-1862</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Washington Manley Wingate</i>	<i>1862-1867</i>
<i>The Rev. John Lemuel Carroll</i>	<i>1867-1869</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Robert Henry Marsh</i>	<i>1869-1873</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Franklin Royal Underwood</i>	<i>1873-1880</i>
<i>The Rev. Charles Augustus Jenkins</i>	<i>1880-1883</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. John Steger Hardaway</i>	<i>1883-1904</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Adoniram B. Dunaway</i>	<i>1904-1911</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Jesse Burton Weatherspoon</i>	<i>1911-1913</i>
<i>The Rev. George Thomas Lumpkin</i>	<i>1913-1916</i>
<i>The Rev. Jacob David Harte</i>	<i>1917-1925</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Oscar Ray Mangum</i>	<i>1926-1929</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. Roy Ray McCulloch</i>	<i>1929-1936</i>
<i>The Rev. Madison Lamar Banister</i>	<i>1936-1954</i>
<i>The Rev. Herbert Wayland Bancom, Jr.</i>	<i>1955-1964</i>
<i>The Rev. Clarence Edwin Godwin</i>	<i>1965-1983</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. E. Rudy Patton</i>	<i>1984-1988</i>
<i>The Rev. Dr. James Steven Bolton</i>	<i>1989-present</i>

Following their tenure at Oxford Baptist Church, several of the above ministers went on to hold other notable positions: Dr. Washington M. Wingate became President of Wake Forest College, and Dr. Robert H. Marsh subsequently became President of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention.

Dr. John S. Hardaway, pastor at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, was a popular minister, known throughout the community. In his honor in 1892, the W.M.U. crafted a quilt which was sewn in a fan pattern and made out of velvet, silks and brocade. Each member made a fan square and sold blades of her fan to friends and family members for 10¢. The donors' names or initials were embroidered in each corner. Over a hundred years later, Hardaway's granddaughters gave this quilt to the church and it now hangs in a glass case in the Church Family Center.

Following Hardaway, Dr. Adoniram B. Dunaway, who served from 1904 until



1911, was the only minister of Oxford Baptist Church to have served in the Confederate Army. Dunaway was only nineteen when he volunteered for service and served four years in the Ninth Virginia Calvary, W.H.F. Lee's Division, J.E.B. Stuart's Corps. Dunaway was ordained as a minister at age thirty.

Following Dunaway, Dr. Jesse B. Weatherspoon came to Oxford Baptist Church as a young man immediately upon the completion of his seminary studies. In 1912, under Weatherspoon's leadership, Oxford Baptist Church organized West Oxford Baptist Church. On September 14, 1912, with Weatherspoon's guidance, the church adopted a *Covenant of Oxford Baptist Church*. A copy is attached to this history. This covenant was the first organized statement of the church's mission and beliefs.

Oxford Baptist Church's second parsonage was purchased in January of 1917, from the Excelsior Seat Company, an Ohio corporation for \$5,500.00. The church's first parsonage had been acquired in 1912 and was located on Williamsboro Street. Oxford Baptist was one of the first Baptist churches in the area to provide housing for her pastors. During the early part of the twentieth century, housing as an additional form of compensation was generally recognized as an attractive bonus to a pastoral position. By the end of the twentieth century, this view of parsonages as a benefit was not universally held. On August 8, 2004, at a church-wide business meeting, the congregation voted to sell the second parsonage, thus allowing pastors to enjoy the benefits of homeownership and relieving the church of the responsibilities associated with being a landlord.



**The second parsonage of Oxford Baptist Church, was purchased in 1917 and was the home to eight pastors on Main Street.**

## VII. The Third and Present Church Building

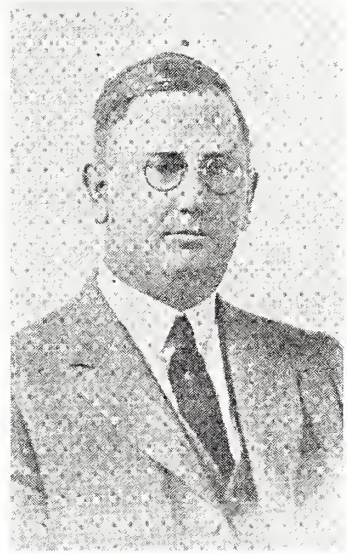
In the latter part of the pastorate of The Reverend Jacob D. Harte, the church felt the necessity to again enlarge the house of worship. After contemplating and rejecting plans to renovate the existing structure, the congregation decided to construct a new building. Part of the money, \$21,000.00, was secured at this time, but not until the arrival of Dr. Oscar R. Mangum in 1925, was the work actually begun. Mangum suggested that the plans duplicate those of a Missouri church where he had previously served as pastor, and the congregation approved those plans. During the construction period, the congregation held services at C.G. Credle School. The pews and pulpit used in the second church were donated to First Baptist Church.

The third and present structure which houses the main sanctuary was completed in 1928. The church organ used in the new building was a gift of Sallie Devin Cannady, daughter of The Reverend Robert I. Devin, the first pastor, and her husband, Dr. S. H. Cannady. *Heritage and Homesteads*, a book inventorying Granville County architecture, describes the present church as follows:

[T]he new Colonial Revival style church was built with a columned portico and a multi-stage front steeple. The octagonal tower at its top is reminiscent of that of the county courthouse... All of its windows are filled with stained glass, the tall ones of its side elevation set in ornate classical frames complete with molded concrete urns (Page 365).

In addition to having a sanctuary with a seating capacity of approximately four hundred and twenty-eight, the third and present structure was constructed with a multi-story education wing to its rear, a parlor and offices on the main floor, and a kitchen and Fellowship Hall in the basement, the latter of which could be subdivided into classrooms by lowering wooden partitions.

Construction of the new church totaled \$125,000.00. Just as the congregation began paying for the structure, The Great Depression of 1929 began. During this period when people throughout the world were suffering unprecedented economic hardship, the congregation sacrificed and worked diligently to raise money. The women of the church served meals as fund raisers. On "Dime Sundays" children were encouraged to contribute a dime to the cause. At the lowest point during this difficult



**Dr. Oscar R. Mangum, pastor of Oxford Baptist Church for four years in the 1920's suggested the plans for the current main church and the structure was built during his tenure as pastor.**





**The third and present home of Oxford Baptist Church. Constructed in a Colonial Revival style. This structure was completed in 1928 and primarily paid for during the Great Depression of the 1930's.**

period when the insurance company holding the mortgage threatened to foreclose, fifty-eight men and women in the church signed a note as guarantors, thereby taking on personal liability for the congregation's debt and preventing foreclosure. This was no mere gesture, for the lien holder was serious about maintaining the personal liability of these individuals for the church's debt. When one of the guarantors, J. F. Meadows died in 1933, the insurance company holding the promissory note refused to allow Meadows' estate to be closed for ten years until the debt was paid in full, lest they lose one of their remedies if the church were to default. Through these efforts, the debt was finally paid in full in 1943, eighteen years after construction was first begun. The paid promissory note and personal guarantee marking this significant milestone remain in the church archives.

## VIII. 1930's through the 1960's

In April of 1938, Oxford Baptist Church hosted the Twenty-Sixth Annual Session of the "Go Forward Convention" of the North Carolina Baraca-Philanthea Association.

In July of 1945, the Oxford School Board permitted Bible to be taught in the Eighth Grade, provided that the local churches be responsible for paying three-fifths of the teacher's salary. Based on this same agreement, Oxford Baptist Church was to pay thirty-eight percent of the ecclesiastical portion. Mrs. E.G. McSwain was hired to fill the position and held this post until 1960.



**A 1950's photograph of the Baraca class on the front steps. Church archives contain a number of other Baraca group pictures spanning several decades.**

On March 1, 1955, Frances Bullock Roden joined the church staff as Oxford Baptist Church's first fulltime secretary. She held this position until her retirement in August 1986, after serving the church for over thirty-one years.

In September, 1956, while The Reverend Herbert W. Baucom, Jr. was serving as pastor, the church first adopted its Constitution. *Forecaster*, a weekly news bulletin, which has become an indispensable means of keeping members abreast of current church news and activities, was first published in 1957.

By the late 1950's Oxford Baptist Church had reached her largest membership to date at 1,499 members. Sunday school was well-attended during this period as well. Sunday school classes met around the block at the Woman's Club, in the Pastor's Study, and



**Frances Bullock Roden served as Oxford Baptist Church's first secretary and played an active role in the life of the church.**



even the basement kitchen. The church took three major actions in response to these cramped conditions.



**In the 1950's Sunday school classes met in all available spaces, including the kitchen.**

The first of these actions was the acquisition of the house on the northwest corner of Spring and Gilliam Streets from the heirs of Augustus S. Hall for \$21,000.00 on April 27, 1958. This structure was used for twelve years as the Children's Building and was sold in 1971 after the old Post Office was renovated to become the Educational Building.

In a second attempt to alleviate crowded conditions, in the spring and summer of 1958, the top two floors of Sunday school rooms behind the main sanctuary underwent extensive



**The Hall House on the corner of Spring and Gilliam Streets served as the church's Children's Building for thirteen years beginning in 1958 .**



renovation, creating more floor space for the children's and youth's classes. Prior to this remodeling, the smaller rooms along the exterior walls on the top floor were connected by balconies. Sunday school groups known as the "Juniors" and "Intermediates" would begin their meetings en mass in the common area of their respective sides of the building and then break off into smaller groups for the remainder of their lessons. In addressing the need for installing the additional flooring for these areas a *Forecaster* article of May 4, 1958 states:

[T]he Junior and Intermediate departments... have some of our most acute needs, with 225 girls and boys enrolled in these two departments. This averages about 11 pupils per class room, which is possible to arrange. However, it averages 125 persons per assembly room which can care for only 80 even by crowding.



**Before the renovation of 1958, Junior Sunday school groups met for assembly prior to breaking off into smaller classes for remainder of their Sunday school lessons.**



**Girl's Sunday school classes of the late 1950's met in smaller classrooms after assembly.**

As a part of this remodeling, air conditioning was installed in this portion of the building. *Forecaster* of July 6, 1958, reports that “this week the finishing up of the Junior and Intermediate rooms is underway.”

The third and most significant occurrence which reduced the strain placed on Oxford Baptist Church’s facilities was the beginning of Delrayno Baptist Church, which was formed as a chapel on May 3, 1959. The newly assembled congregation held its first meetings in the Masonic Temple. On September 19, 1960, Oxford Baptist Church gave the Delrayno congregation the large tract of land on which that church presently stands. This land was purchased at a cost of \$20,000.00. In November 1960, Delrayno Baptist Church was organized as an independent church with eighty-two members, sixty-nine of which came from Oxford Baptist Church.

The 1960’s saw several miscellaneous but lasting changes. Handbells were first acquired on March 13, 1966. Eliminating the need to open sanctuary windows on hot summer Sundays, air conditioning was installed in the main sanctuary and used for the first time on Sunday, June 4, 1967. In March of 1968, upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons, the church voted to have a pictorial directory made. A copy was completed and mailed to each member of the church. The directory has been updated several times.



**The Coble Printing Company building on Littlejohn Street acquired in 1967 served as a Youth Hut for a number of years.**

On July 28, 1967, the church bought the Vaught Funeral Home and the Coble Printing Company buildings on Littlejohn Street from Mrs. W. N. Thomas. Shortly thereafter, the funeral home was demolished and the lot used as a playground prior to the construction of the Church Family Center. The printing company building served as a “Youth Hut” up through the 1990’s. At that point, Christian Churches in Ministry (C.C.M.), a non-denominational, need-based ministry supported by local churches, began using the building as a donation site for clothing and canned goods. Following this use, the structure, which had fallen into a state of disrepair, was razed to create space for the Church Family Center.

## **IX. Trading for the Post Office**

In late 1966 or early 1967, it became evident that the Oxford Post Office on the southeast corner of Main and Littlejohn Streets would soon be vacated. A new post office and federal office building were being planned for Oxford. Realizing the church’s need for additional space, then Chairman of the Board of Deacons, L. Clement Yancey,



assembled a group consisting of John Ed Pittard, Jr. and Hugh M. Currin, Sr., to approach federal officials regarding a purchase of the post office property. With the assistance of R. P. Cunningham, an Oxford native with federal government connections, the group was able to arrange a meeting in Atlanta with the Regional Administrator of the United States General Services Administration (G.S.A.), the agency in charge of disposing of surplus federal property. While the G.S.A. was not interested in a direct sale of this property to the church, the agency did wish to acquire additional land for parking at a newly constructed government building in Waynesville, North Carolina. Based on this information, the group made several trips to Waynesville to meet with the owners of the property that was the subject of government interest. Following lengthy negotiations over the course of sixteen months, the sisters who owned the Waynesville property sold their land to Oxford Baptist Church. The group arranging this transaction on behalf of the church then struck a deal with the G.S.A. to trade the Post Office for the Waynesville property: both the Oxford Post Office, owned by the federal government, and the Waynesville property, owned by Oxford Baptist Church, were to be appraised and the difference in value was to be paid by the party whose land prior to the trade was worth the lesser amount.

All of the negotiations involved in this transaction were kept in confidence between the initial negotiating group, the church trustees and the pastor, The Reverend Clarence E. Godwin. Upon seeking church approval for proceeding with the entire transaction, there was a great deal of discussion. When at one point in the church-wide Sunday business conference one member expressed disapproval of putting his Savior in a post office, another quipped that a post office was certainly an improvement over a stable! In the end, church approval for the transaction was granted.

Following the church's decision to pursue the deal, the Waynesville property was determined to be of slightly lesser value than the Oxford Post Office. The total cost of the transaction for the church, including the additional funds paid to the G.S.A. to even the trade, was approximately \$33,000.00. In appreciation of the work of the church committee, the ladies who initially owned the Waynesville property made a gift to Oxford Baptist Church of approximately \$2,000.00.

The former post office, built in 1913, had been constructed in a Neo-Classical Revival style



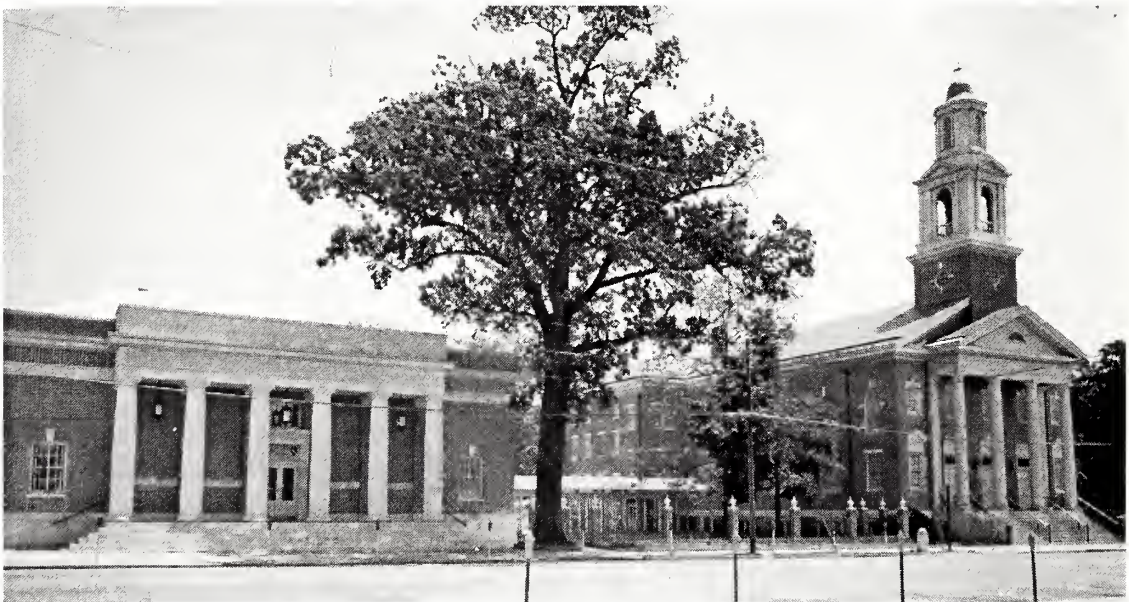
**The Rev. Clarence E. Godwin served as pastor for eighteen years and during the acquisition of the Educational Building. Godwin was well respected throughout the community for his pastoral role at Oxford Baptist.**

in brick that was coincidentally very similar in appearance to the brick used in present the main church building. In spite of this exterior similarity between the two buildings, there had been a wide divergence in purpose and the former post office required extensive renovation before it could become a suitable Educational Building. The needed renovation included obvious changes such as the removal of the post office boxes and drawers and the reconfiguration of the building's interior for class rooms.

The renovation also required less obvious alterations such as the removal of the secret passage way and observance walk used by the Post Master to supervise workers in a era before electronic surveillance. To accomplish this renovation, the church appointed two committees: a Planning Committee and a Construction Committee. George W. Kane, Inc., a Vance County



**The Oxford Post Office built in 1913 was acquired by trade with the Federal Government in 1968.**



**Educational Building with the covered walkway that connected to the main church.**



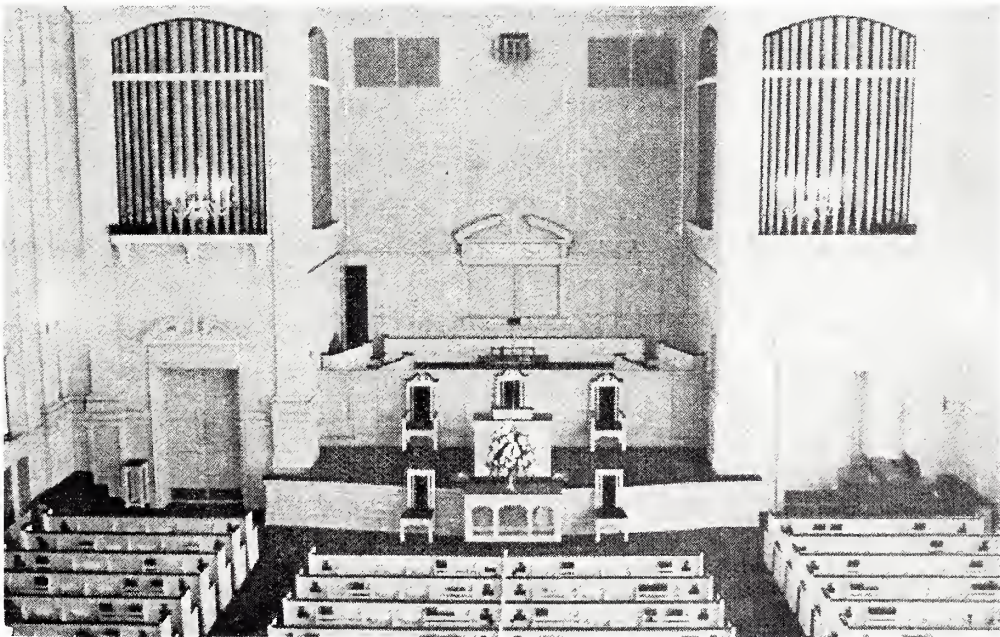
contracting firm, did the construction work on a cost-plus basis not to exceed a designated amount. The building with all renovations cost in excess of \$150,000.00. The remodeled structure greatly expanded the church's class room facilities and additionally housed a new Study for the pastor. With all of the renovation completed, the new Educational Building was dedicated on February 8, 1970.

## X. Events of the 1970's

A major expenditure occurred in 1973 when the felt under the slate roof on the sanctuary was replaced at a cost of \$35,000.00. Twenty percent of this sum was the cost of renting the scaffolding.

In September 1975, seeking to meet the needs of young families in the church and as a means of community outreach, Oxford Baptist Church Nursery School was established. Initially, its enrollment of twenty-three consisted of three and four-year-olds. The nursery school met on the first floor of the Educational Building depending on the age group, two or three mornings a week. The name of the nursery school was later changed to Weekday Early Education ("W.E.E.") School. It operates today with an approximate enrollment of eight two-year-olds, fourteen three-year-olds, and twenty four-year-olds, all cared for by five teachers.

On September 5, 1976, a constitutional amendment was approved by a two-thirds majority vote for women to be eligible to serve on the Board of Deacons.



**Interior of the sanctuary prior to alterations in the 1970's and subsequent changes early of 1980's in conjunction with replacing the organ.**

The 1970's saw several changes to the interior of the main sanctuary. On September 8, 1976, the familiar red seat cushions were added. Whereas carpet had previously only been used on the aisles, red carpet was installed throughout the sanctuary, on December 21, 1977. In February of 1978, the pulpit was reworked from its original flat front, and steps were installed which ascended from all angles.<sup>1</sup>



**Former church hostess, Blanche Montague and long-time custodian Jerome Hawkins in the midst of a big meal.**

On June 15, 1977, in response to the need for recreation space, the church purchased from the Oxford Orphanage, 5.88 acres of land on the western side of Goshen Street for \$12,000.00. The subsequent opening of Quailridge Road divided this property in half and thereby reduced the land's value. The church sold what remained of this property on September 16, 1992, for fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00).

## **XI. Major Repairs / Expenditures of the 1980's**

By 1981, the organ donated in 1928 by the Cannadys was no longer striking melodious notes. An organ consultant was hired. After much research, the Schantz Organ Company of Orrville, Ohio, was awarded the contract to build a new organ at a cost of \$81,240.00. In conjunction with replacement of the organ, the choir loft was reworked from its original semicircular shape to its present straight pew arrangement. This renovation provided room needed for the new organ and increased the seating capacity of the choir loft. In an additional change that accompanied the organ replacement, the artificial organ pipes which occupied the alcoves above the doors at the front of the

---

<sup>1</sup> At a church business conference on May 6, 1990, the congregation approved the installation of a wooden cross over the choir loft.



sanctuary were removed. The new organ was dedicated on May 17, 1981, during Sunday morning worship. Today a similar organ would cost approximately \$236,099.00.

Fifty-nine years after it was first erected, the church steeple, which is ninety feet tall, was in need of extensive repair. Upon investigating leaks in the main sanctuary, a great deal of evidence was discovered that a number of birds had made Oxford Baptist's steeple their home. In the cleanup effort following this discovery, a large part of the wooden structure was found to be rotten. The Building and Grounds Committee, with the approval of the Board of Deacons, made a recommendation in a church conference that the current steeple be duplicated in fiberglass at a cost of \$90,000.00. Following discussion and deliberation in several protracted Sunday business conferences, the congregation ultimately voted to restore the old wooden steeple. A contract was signed on May 22, 1987, with Skyline Engineers of MD, Inc. for the steeple's renovation at a cost of \$58,600.00. The steeple was successfully repaired based on this agreement and still stands among the other steeples in town as a proud symbol of Baptist heritage in Oxford.

In spite of the changes through three church structures, the same church bell stamped "Meneelys' West Troy, N. Y., 1870," has been continuously used to summon the Baptist of Oxford to worship.

Rounding out the major maintenance and upkeep expenditures of the 1980's, was the boiler used to heat the sanctuary and main church building. After breaking down in March of 1990, the original boiler was replaced at a cost of \$20,900.00.



**Steeplejacks perform extensive restoration on Oxford Baptist's steeple in the late 1980's.**

## **XII. Church Staff Changes of the 1980's**

On August 1, 1986, Dorothy "Dot" I. Adcock became the church's Financial Secretary, a position she capably held until her retirement in March of 1997.

It was a fortunate day for Oxford Baptist Church, when in June of 1989, Dr. James Steven Bolton answered the call to serve in the church's pastoral position. A



**Dr. J. Steven Bolton, pastor since 1989. Bolton has lead Oxford Baptist Church through major expansion and steered the congregation on a course to meet needs in the twenty-first century.**

native of Knoxville, Tennessee, Bolton earned a B.A. from Carson-Newman College, in Jefferson City, Tennessee and pursued post-graduate studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Wake Forest where he obtained a Doctor of Ministry. Prior to coming to Oxford Baptist, Bolton held positions in several churches in Tennessee and North Carolina. Learned, well-read and insightful, Bolton's sermons are regularly thought provoking and inspiring. He has guided Oxford Baptist Church through significant physical expansion and necessary renovation, culminating in the Church Family Center and other improvements to the church facilities. Additionally Bolton has steered Oxford Baptist Church on a moderate course in keeping with the church's history and tradition in spite of recent turbulent times within the Southern Baptist Convention. During his tenure Oxford Baptist Church has flourished. Bolton's wife, Karen Hickman Bolton, has herself taken an active role in church affairs since their arrival, serving as Sunday school teacher, participating in the Music Ministry, revitalization of the church library, as well as many other church events. The couple has two sons who spent their teenage years attending and participating in activities and worship at Oxford Baptist Church.

### **XIII. Church Family Center**

By the mid-1990's the church facilities had become outdated and were not best suited to address the congregation's future needs of church growth and community outreach. The church offices were spread between two buildings and the current facilities did not provide adequate handicap access. With an outlook to address these and similar concerns and based on a number of studies of the church's vision and mission that began as early as 1964, on February 27, 1994, Oxford Baptist Church established a Renovation/Expansion Commission ("the Commission"), which consisted of the following members:

*T.S. "Sam" Royster, Jr., Chairman*

*L. Macon Carrington*

*Meredith "Missy" D. Cottrell*

*Ginnie D. Currin*

*Gary T. Davis*

*George E. Ivey*

*John Ed Pittard*

*Dorothy G. Pruitt*

*Isabel R. Washington*



This group was charged with the broad responsibilities of planning, building and financing a church family center. The Commission began its work on March 8, 1994, and engaged the services of the architectural firm of Pearce, Brinkley, Cease and Lee, P.A., to assist in developing a master plan for construction of a church family center, which would include offices for the church staff as well as a plan for renovation of the existing church buildings.

Following this initial action, the Commission then expanded its membership to include the chairpersons of each major church committee and the church staff to assist in the planning process. After numerous planning conferences involving the expanded Commission, the architects, and the church staff, on March 12, 1995, a two-phase proposed master plan for the addition of a 15,000 square foot church family center and renovation of the main church building was presented to the church. On March 25, 1995, the congregation attended a forum to learn about the details of this proposal.

Based on the March forum, a revised master plan was presented to the church on July 9, 1995. The congregation approved the revised plan and authorized the architects to prepare working plans for construction of the Church Family Center (Phase I of the project). The congregation also authorized the Commission to submit the project to contractors for bids.

On September 24, 1996, bids from three contractors were opened, and all bids far exceeded the budget estimates for the project. Over the next several months, the Commission worked with the architects and contractors in a largely unsuccessful attempt to pare the project costs and bring the proposed construction within budget.

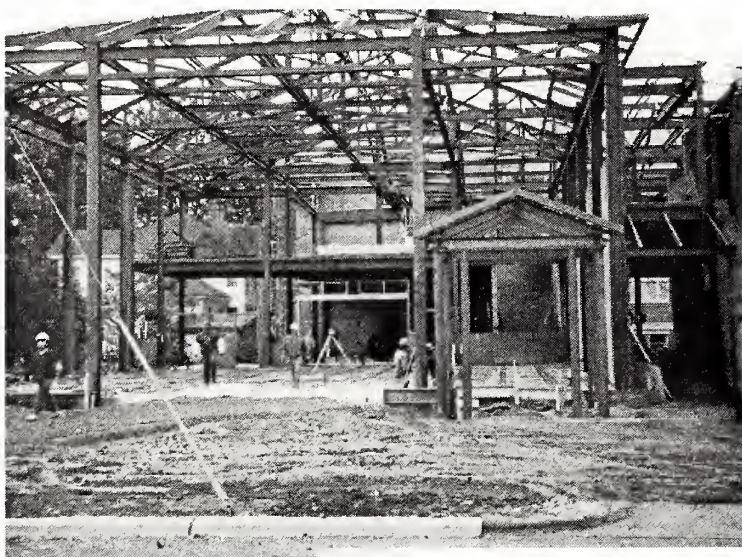
On March 17, 1997, the Commission, the Finance Committee and the Board of



**Ground breaking ceremony for the Church Family Center in 1997.**

Deacons held a joint meeting that resulted in the Deacons voting unanimously to recommend to the congregation that the church construct the Church Family Center and other renovations as designed at a total project cost of \$2,722,838.00. Flythe Construction Company of Raleigh was named as the general contractor and financing was to be provided by Fidelity Bank.

The congregation approved the project on April 13, 1997, and authorized the Trustees to execute the construction contract and loan documents. Construction was commenced shortly after church approval and was completed on or about July 1, 1998. After completing construction, the project provided for among other things: centralized



**A view from Littlejohn Street: Construction of the Church Family Center was begun in the spring of 1997.**

**The Church Family Center was completed in July, 1998.**





church offices on the first floor of the Church Family Center, additional classroom space, a new library, a spacious above-ground meeting hall and kitchen. Additionally, the renovations provided elevator access to all floors of the church buildings. The facility was dedicated in a special service and has served the congregation and the community since.



**Oxford Baptist Church Family Center hosts many events and church-wide gatherings**

The initial funds for the Church Family Center came from a generous bequest from T. Ray Knott and his wife Nollie L. Knott. The remaining portion of the project is continuing to be paid for through sacrificial giving by the congregation and through a number of memorials.

#### **XIV. Major Expenditures in the Twenty-first Century**

In 2002, the church spent \$43,575.00 to reline the built-in gutters in an attempt to stop leaks in the main building. After the leaks were repaired, the sanctuary was repainted. At the same time, the pews were refinished, new carpet and a new public address system were installed. The total cost of these improvements was \$55,171.00.

On August 27, 2002, the congregation purchased for \$120,000.00 the former Oxford Woman's Club on the corner of Gilliam and Littlejohn Streets. The Oxford

Woman's Club had owned this antebellum structure since January 12, 1923, and during this period the house had served as a center for many community events. Given the structure's need of extensive repairs and the church's acute need for outside space, the church voted to raze the structure and appointed a committee to determine how to use the land. At the same business conference on August 8, 2004, the church voted to sell the parsonage.



**Oxford Baptist Church purchased the former Oxford Woman's Club on the corner of Gilliam and Littlejohn Streets in 2002 to make room for a playground within the block.**

## **XV. Adoption of a Core Values Statement**

In response to the conservative movement in the Southern Baptist Convention, in 1998 the deacons formed a Core Beliefs Committee consisting of the following individuals:

*J. Steven Bolton  
Ronnie E. Bullock  
James E. Cross, Jr.  
Robert E. Garrett  
Arthur D. Marks*

*Norman S. Jones, Jr.  
Cynthia S. Joy  
Lila H. Overby  
Mary "Peggy" G. Reinitz  
Betty Wainwright*

This committee was charged with the task of formulating a statement of the basic beliefs of Oxford Baptist Church. The committee created a draft statement and then held four church-wide forums to gather input from the entire congregation. The end result was a Core Values Statement that was adopted by the congregation at a church business conference on September 19, 1999. Dr. J. Steven Bolton closed the business conference that day by stating that "the Core Values Statement will not only provide a means of sharing with others the mission of [Oxford Baptist Church], but will also serve as a valuable educational tool." The Core Values Statement is attached to this history.

## **XVI. Honorariums & Memorials**

Members of Oxford Baptist Church have served home and country proudly in times of war from the Civil War to World Wars I and II up to the present conflicts in Iraq and Middle East. A plaque in the vestibule of the sanctuary lists members who served in World War II.

In addition to tithes and offerings which are essential to Oxford Baptist Church's continuing to operate and sustain her mission, over the years the church has received contributions in a number of other forms. Many church members and loved ones have been memorialized through useful, attractive gifts which have contributed to the overall ministry of the church. A permanent record of all such memorials is maintained and stored in a glass encased book in the vestibule of the sanctuary. Other contributions in honor or memory of individuals include: placing flowers in the church sanctuary for Sunday worship, donating books and materials to the church library and purchasing poinsettias to be placed in the sanctuary at Christmas.

The Susan E. Hill Scholarship is given annually to a member of Oxford Baptist Church who is graduating from high school and has demonstrated involvement and service to Oxford Baptist Church.

## XVII. The Ministry, Missions & Leadership

Previous church histories cite that Oxford Baptist Church has influenced the following men to enter the ministry:

*Dr. Hunter Hardaway*

*The Reverend R.E. Hardaway*

*The Reverend W.B. Pittard, Jr.*

*The Reverend Paul Gillespie*

*The Reverend Bob Holland*

*The Reverend James E. Baucom*

*The Reverend James A. Blanchard*

*The Reverend Coy H. Jeans, Jr.*

Undoubtedly this list is not all-inclusive, for there are surely other men and women throughout the church's history who have worshiped and attended Oxford Baptist Church and have gone into the ministry or mission fields.

Oxford Baptist continues to be deeply engaged in the missionary movement and missions on a local and worldwide level. Some of the mission work which Oxford Baptist Church supports includes:

Global Missions Offering, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Southern Baptist Convention

North Carolina Baptist State Convention

Baptist Children Homes

Area Congregations in Ministry

Church & Community Ministries

In the past decade alone, the church has contributed over \$1,043,940.00 in support of these and other mission causes.

Oxford Baptist Church has been fortunate throughout her history in having a number of ordained ministers among the congregation as well as laymen who have served in leadership positions. Present ordained ministers who are members of Oxford

Baptist Church include: The Reverend James A. Blanchard, The Reverend B. Patrick Cox, The Reverend A.B. Greene, Jr., The Reverend Robert E. Garrett, and The Reverend Robert H. Wainright, former Director of the Flat River Baptist Association.

A partial listing of members of Oxford Baptist Church who have been elected to leadership positions within the Flat River Baptist Association includes:

<i>E.C. Montague</i> , Treasurer	1868-1871
<i>Titus T. Grandy</i> , Treasurer	1873-1874
<i>Walter P. Stradley</i> , Clerk	1887
<i>Franklin P. Hobgood</i> , Moderator	1882-1888
<i>Franklin Wills Hancock, Sr.</i> , Treasurer	1897-1899
<i>William A. Devin</i> , Moderator	1913-1916
<i>Franklin Wills Hancock, Sr.</i> , Moderator	1925-1927
<i>Willard Henry Upchurch</i> , Moderator	1928-1936
<i>Madison Lamar Banister</i> , Moderator	1949-1950
<i>Sam C. Hall</i> , Moderator	1953-1954
<i>William A. Mitchiner</i> , Moderator	1957-1958
<i>Herbert W. Baucom, Jr.</i> Moderator	1959-1960
<i>Clarence Edwin Godwin</i> , Moderator	1971-1973
<i>J.B. Clay</i> , Moderator	1978-1979
<i>Norman S. Jones, Jr.</i> , Treasurer	1988-1998
<i>J. Steven Bolton</i> , Moderator	1999-2000

## XVIII. Ministers of Education /Associate Pastors

The role, responsibilities, and title of this job have varied over the years with the needs of the church and the particular talents and interests of the person holding the position. Some individuals have focused on youth and educational ministries, while others have taken on more general ministerial responsibilities. Individuals who have held this position include:

<i>Miss Ila Hensley</i>	1944-1945	<i>The Rev. Walter Coleman</i>	1968-1971
<i>Miss Hallie Coppedge</i>	1945-1946	<i>Mr. Thomas E. Humble</i>	1971-1974
<i>Miss Betty Kirkpatrick</i>	1946	<i>Mr. Don Cliver</i>	1974-1978
--vacancy		<i>Mr. Ronald R. Carothers</i>	1978-1981
<i>Miss Rebecca Maness</i>	1953-1961	<i>Mr. Tony McDade</i>	1982-1987
<i>Mr. John Carty</i>	1962-1963	<i>Mrs. Debbie W. Evans</i>	1987-1990
<i>Mr. Rudy Potter</i>	1964-1965	<i>The Rev. Timothy Glen Parker</i>	1987-1990
<i>Mr. Paul R. Powell</i>	1966	<i>Mr. Dan Baird</i>	1991-1994
<i>Mr. Joe Wheeler</i>	1967-1968	<i>The Rev. B. Patrick Cox</i>	1995-2003
		<i>Susan S. Crews</i>	2005-present



A number of these people have gone on to hold pastoral positions at other churches and others have subsequently gone into foreign missions. Oxford Baptist Church has undoubtedly benefited from the service of all of these individuals.

## **XIX. The Music Ministry**

While music has always played an important role in the life and ministry of Oxford Baptist Church, the church's music program has certainly come a long way since the mid-nineteenth century and the use of a tuning fork to begin congregational singing. Throughout much of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, Organists and Assistant Organists directed choirs and organized the musical portion of Sunday worship services. These individuals worked on a volunteer basis. The following partial list is based on the surviving records and church minutes:

### **Organists & Assistant Organists**

<i>Mrs. L. G. Crawford</i>	1869—1887	<i>Prof. — Muilberger</i>	1925—1926
<i>Miss Lizzie Hobgood</i>	1888—1890	<i>Miss — Howell</i>	1926—1927
<i>Mrs. — Ray</i>	1894	<i>Miss Dorothy Parham</i>	1927—1941
<i>Miss Lonnie Currin</i>	1894	<i>Mrs. A. W. Graham, Jr.</i>	1941—1943
<i>Miss Helen Cannady</i>	1900	<i>Mrs. — Keels</i>	1943—1944
<i>Miss Louisa Buchanan</i>		<i>Miss Dorothy Parham</i>	1944—1945
assistant organist	1903—1906	<i>Mr. Rom Chandler</i>	
<i>Miss — Levin</i>	1906	assistant organist	1944—1945
<i>Miss Mary Webb</i>		<i>Miss Ila Hensley</i>	1945—1946
assistant organist	1906—1922	<i>Mrs. Frank Currin</i>	
<i>Miss Agnes Cannady</i>		assistant organist	1946
assistant organist	1922	<i>Miss Mammie Herring</i>	
<i>Miss Sadie Parham</i>	1924	assistant organist	1946
		<i>Mrs. Evelyn Culton</i>	1946—1955

In 1949, Oxford Baptist Church added the full-time staff position of Minister of Music, and Ruth Harover Yancey was the first to fill this post. Thereafter, Minister of Music has remained a position on the church staff, sometimes occupied by two individuals simultaneously as in the case of Chris and Connie Jenkins who jointly held the position in the late 1970's. Ministers of Music who have served at Oxford Baptist Church are as follows:

### **Ministers of Music**

<i>Mrs. Ruth Harover Yancey</i>	1949—1956	<i>Mrs. Tapp L. Hancock, interim</i>	1966
<i>Mr. James Good</i>	1955—1956	<i>Mrs. Anne Hayes Daniel</i>	1966—1970
<i>Mr. Roy Scoggins</i>	1956—1960	<i>Mrs. Barbara Humble</i>	1970—1976
<i>Mr. Bob Holland, interim</i>	1960—1961	<i>Mr. Larry Rollins</i>	1976—1978
<i>Mr. Robert Sutter</i>	1961—1963	<i>Mrs. Connie Jenkins</i>	1978—1979
<i>Mrs. Max Smith</i>	1963	<i>Mr. Chris Jenkins</i>	1978—1979
<i>Mr. Gary Crow</i>	1963—1966	<i>Mrs. Cynthia "Cindy" S. Joy</i>	1980—Present

Records indicate that throughout all generations, Oxford Baptist's Music Ministry has been fortunate to have dedicated choir members and participants in general who have added greatly to the quality of worship and services at the church. Choirs and the music program have traditionally served as an opportunity for individuals to contribute to the



**An Oxford Baptist children's choir of the 1950's with some familiar faces.**



**The sanctuary choir of the early 1970's under the direction of Barbra Humble with many long-time choir members.**



overall ministry of the church and provided a means for fellowship.

Anyone familiar with Oxford Baptist Church's music program will agree that the Music Ministry has experienced a period of sustained crescendo under the capable leadership of Cynthia "Cindy" Sprayberry Joy, current Minister of Music. A native of Newnan, Georgia, Joy came to Oxford Baptist Church in February of 1980. Prior to her arrival, she earned a B.A. in Music Education and Applied Organ from Tift College in Forsythe, Georgia and a Masters of Church Music and Organ Pedagogy from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Though her humble demeanor and winning ways would never give any indication, Joy is recognized for her talents in Baptist music circles across the state and is often asked to play the organ or to take other leadership roles at state-wide choir festivals. Joy maintains memberships in Choristers Guild, American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, North Carolina Baptist Singers and American Choral Directors Association. She has created

the present framework for Oxford Baptist Church's Music Ministry both in terms of choir structure and scheduling of annual events around the Christian calendar. As a harbinger of the innovation that marks her tenure at Oxford Baptist Church, in 1982 Joy initiated the "Hanging of the Greens," which has become a well-attended, community-wide service in which the sanctuary is decorated for Christmas and the Advent Season. Following her arrival at Oxford Baptist, Joy married Oxford native, David T. Joy, who supports her in her work. The couple has two sons and a daughter.

In 2004, in recognition of Joy's quarter century of service to Oxford Baptist's Music Ministry, the church commissioned an anthem written by Baptist musician and composer Pepper Choplin. The work was first performed at a banquet held in January of 2005 in the Church Family Center in Joy's honor.

For over thirty years Oxford Baptist Church Music Ministry has been blessed to have the voluntary service of Brenda S. Currin, who has assisted in skillfully playing the



**Rehearsals in the mid-1980's**

**Above: Sanctuary Choir; Below: Children's handbell choir practices with chimes.**



piano for Sunday services, special programs and countless rehearsals in preparation for these events.

Upon the Music Ministry's steady increase in enrollment, Martha P. Thompson began as Music Ministry Assistant in January of 1989 and has since held this position aiding in the function and expansion of the church's Music Ministry.

Oxford Baptist's Music Ministry enrollment currently stands at approximately 317 participants. Choirs and other musical groups are open to all who wish to participate. The only expectation is a commitment to rehearse, attend worship services and special programs.

Children's Choirs are presently organized as follows and meet on Wednesday nights:

*Kindermusick*

ages 2 though 3

*Joyful Noise*

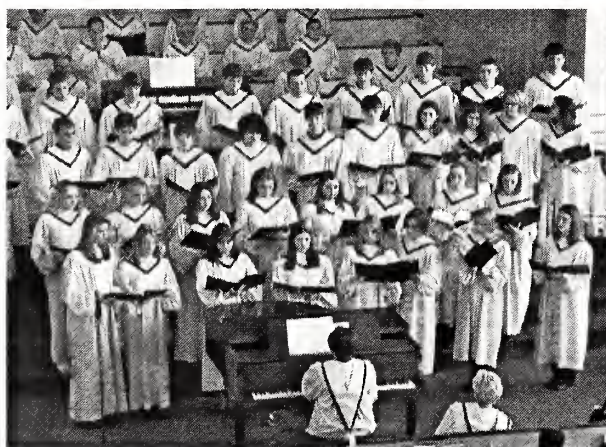
ages 4 through 5

*Music Makers*

1st though 3rd graders

*Young Musicians*

4th through 6th graders



**A youth choir sings in Sunday worship.**



**Children's choir singing with the Sanctuary Choir in worship on Palm Sunday.**

In addition to weekly rehearsals during the school year and singing in church services, Young Musicians annually attends Children's Choir Camp at Caswell, located on the coast at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. In the last several years, children's choirs have presented several Easter Pageants and Christmas Programs involving over 100 children in each production. In the mid-1980's Oxford Baptist children's choirs filmed a nationally televised special in conjunction with Charles Kuralt's and Loonis McGlohon's book of the same name, *North Carolina is my Home*.





**The Instrumental Ensemble, Adult Handbell Ringers and a children's hanbell choir perform at various worship services at Oxford Baptist Church.**

Youth choirs are organized as follows and meet on Sunday nights:

*Junior High Choir*

7th through 8th graders

*Senior High Choir*

9th through 12th graders

Oxford Baptist youth choirs annually attend the North Carolina Baptist Youth Choir Festival, which is traditionally held at Wake Forest University. In recent years youth choirs have undertaken a number of mission trips/choir tours in the summer, and have traveled to cities across the southeastern United States, from New Orleans to Baltimore.

The adult choirs presently consist of the Sanctuary Choir; The Male Chorale, which includes older high school students as well as adults; and the Instrumental Ensemble, a group which was established in the Fall of 2003 that has had as many as seventeen members ranging in age from eighth graders through adults.

In addition, handbells choirs have become an important component of Oxford Baptist Church's Music Ministry. Oxford Baptist's first set of handbells was acquired on March 13, 1966. As the handbell program has expanded a second set of bells was added in 1992 and a set of chimes was given to the church as well. Handbell choirs are organized as follows:

*Children's Handbell Ringers I*

4th graders

*Children's Handbell Ringers II/III*

5th & 6th graders

*Celebration Ringers*

7th through 10th graders

*Oxford Ringers*

10th through 12th graders

*Adult Handbell Ringers*

college age through adult

In addition to providing music for Sunday worship and special services, Oxford Baptist Church's handbell choirs regularly participate in a number of festivals with other



groups from across the state. Children's handbell choirs take part in the Capital Area Ringers Festivals sponsored by The Raleigh Ringers, and the adult handbell group attends the North Carolina Baptist Adult Festival. Beyond these state-wide festivals, Oxford Baptist handbell choirs in recent years have participated in a number of American Guild of English Handbell Festivals from Huntsville, Alabama to Niagara Falls, New York. Handbell choirs held special performances at the Governor's Mansion and at Biltmore Estate in Asheville.



**Oxford Ringers after performing at the Governor's Mansion**

The Music Ministry at Oxford Baptist Church is alive and well through the works of many individuals and groups. Since the church's inception, music has played an integral part of worship. It continues to carry out this function today as well as creating a great opportunity for members to take part in the work of the church, engage in fellowship, travel and undertake a host of other activities as groups and extensions of Oxford Baptist Church.

## **XX. The Present Church**

Oxford Baptist Church has a current membership of approximately 1,060 individuals with about 700 residential members. In spite of the recent ultra-conservative climate, the church remains affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Oxford Baptist Church participates in The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, The North Carolina Baptist State Convention and is a member of the Flat River Baptist Association. In Baptist tradition, the local church remains autonomous.

The present staff is as follows:

Pastor:

*Dr. J. Steven Bolton*

Minister of Music:

*Cynthia "Cindy" S. Joy*

Minister of Youth and Discipleship

*Susan S. Crews*

Financial Secretary/

Office Manager:

*Judy Ligon*

Church Secretary:

*Mary C. Adcock*

Music Ministry Assistant:

*Martha P. Thompson*

Church Hostess:

*Sharon S. Currin*

Sexton:

*Tommy Hawley*

Sunday school Meets every Sunday at 9:45 a.m. Sunday schools are presently organized as follows:

PRE-SCHOOL DIVISION

Dept. I (Infants)  
Dept. II (Toddler & 1 year olds)  
Dept. III (2 & 3 year olds)  
Dept. IV (4 & 5 year olds)

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades  
3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grades  
5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grades

YOUTH DIVISION

Youth I (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grades)  
Youth II (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grades)

ADULT I DIVISION

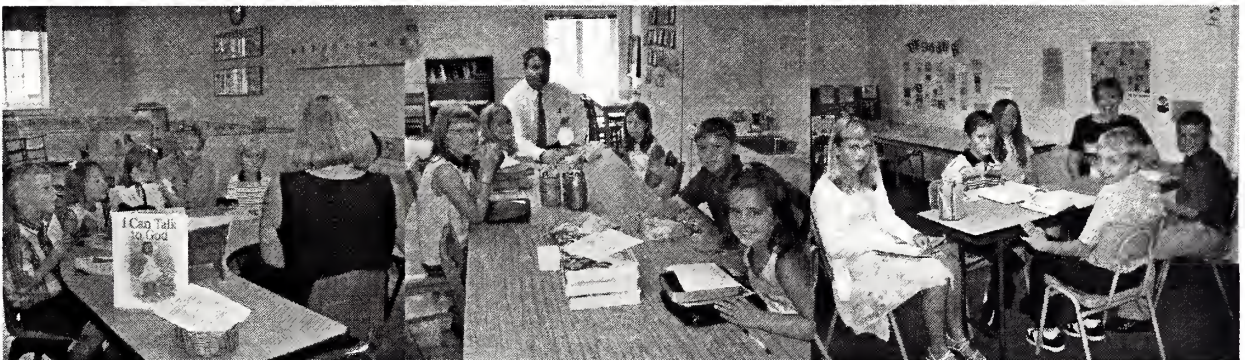
College & Young Adults  
Couples Classes

ADULT II DIVISION

Jo Ann B. Slaughter Class  
Lila Haney Overby Class  
Men's Class

ADULT III DIVISION

Elsie Bragg Class  
Edith Cannady Class  
Devin Bible Class



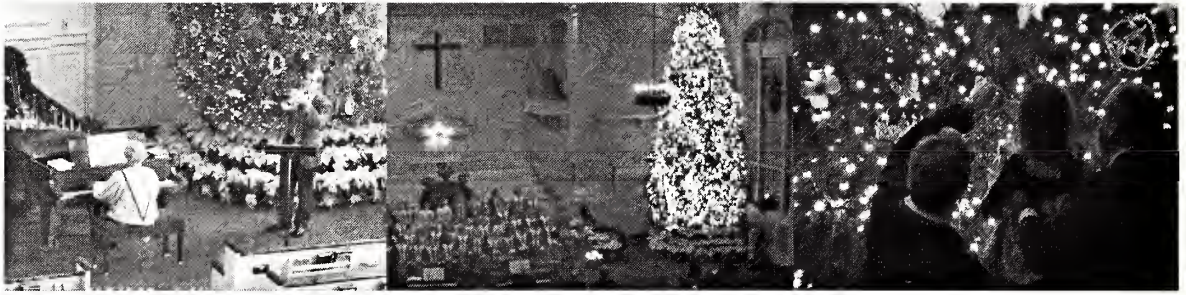
**Children Sunday School classes meet in the Educational Building.**

Sunday worship service begins at 11:00 a.m., but many arrive earlier. A nursery for babies and young children is provided, and sermon tracts are available for the hard of hearing. While women and men no longer part company at the church door as was the custom in Oxford Baptist's early days, many families and individuals do have sections or even certain pews in which they regularly sit for worship. However, in the spacious sanctuary there is ample room for all.

Following services on warm days, members often meet and mingle on the sidewalk. On colder days, some of this greeting may occur within the church following the service. Oxford Baptist strives to extend a warm welcome to all visitors and new members.

Beyond Sunday school and Sunday worship, Oxford Baptist Church offers other





### **Celebration of Christmas and the Advent Season at Oxford Baptist Church.**

resources, including an array of additional activities and number of opportunities for service and fellowship. *Forecaster of Oxford Baptist Church* distributed in the mail on a weekly basis provides a schedule of these various activities and special events occurring within a given week.

A major resource available at Oxford Baptist Church is the library. The present collection was developed and maintained over the years through the work of a number of individuals including Helen Finch, Ernestine "Teenie" S. Cash and others. Since the early 1990's, under the leadership of Karen H. Bolton, the church's Library has experienced a renaissance with its relocation from the sanctuary basement to the new facility located in the Church Family Center. The library's mission statement reads "The Library of Oxford Baptist Church is committed to help win persons to Christ and promote a Christian lifestyle." This statement is further elaborated by specific points concerning winning people to Christ, studying and teaching the Bible, strengthening faith in troubled times, and personal ethics. Assistant Media Center Director, Lila H. Overby describes the library's collection:

[The library's] mission statement is our guide in media selection... We focus on children's books (we have several hundred) and faith based adult reading and audio/visuals. In addition, we have a selection of adult fiction that is carefully screened to stay within our mission statement. We have all categories of library materials from psychology to history and geography, but about half of the adult collection is in the 'Christian' groupings (Bible study, prayers, devotions, Christian life, theology and missions)... Currently we have about 2,500 titles on the shelves and new ones are added regularly.

In addition to this collection, the library provides video tapes, and D.V.D.'s of Sunday worship services and other special services that are available to check out or to keep. Library staff hours are as follows:

Wednesday 5:30 — 7:30 p.m.

Sundays 9:15 — 10:45 a.m. and 12:00 to 12:15 p.m.



Access is granted by the church staff 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays

As previously mentioned, Women's Missionary Union (W.M.U.) is among the very active groups at Oxford Baptist Church. Some of the many missions activities which W.M.U. carries out include the following:

- Visiting and volunteering at several area rest homes;
- Volunteering at Area Congregations in Ministry (A.C.I.M.);
- Volunteering at Hopsice;
- Collecting items on a monthly basis for the Christmas Toy Ministry;
- Delivering Meals on Wheels every Friday;
- Taking luncheon plates to shut-ins and eating meals with these individuals;
- Serving Thanksgiving meals;
- Sewing turbans, hats and scarves for cancer patients;
- Collecting shampoo and soap for Women's Prisons; and
- Sending boxes to Iraq with needed items: shampoo, soap and children's vitamins.

W.M.U. consists of four women's groups: (1) Day Women on Mission, which meets at the church on 10:30 a.m. on the second Monday of the month; (2) Business Women on Mission, which meets at noon for lunch on the second Monday of the month;



**W.M.U. activities, from left to right: Franklin Graham Shoebox Ministry; World Day of Prayer; Trip to Lottie Moon memorial in Crewe, Virginia**

(3) Night Women on Missions, which meets at members' homes at night on the Monday after the first Sunday of the month; and (4) Women on Mission Together, which meets at the church on Wednesday nights.

Additionally, W.M.U. serves as an umbrella organization for four groups that

cater to all ages of children from infants to youth, all of which all presently meet at Church on Wednesday nights from 6:45 to 7:30 p.m.:

- Nursery Missions—a group for infants to three-year-olds. Teachers use music, movement, books, pictures, nature, toys and puzzles to help infants learn about missions and the Bible;
- Mission Friends—includes children in preschool (ages four through five). Lessons cover missionaries, Bible stories and mission stories. Children in this group learn that prayer is talking to God; they learn about giving to missions and they do activities to help others;
- Girls in Action (G.A.'s)—a mission based study group for girls from First through Sixth Grades, in which girls learn to see the needs of others, how they can help meet those needs and about missionaries throughout the world; and
- Youth on Mission—a group that includes girls and boys from Seventh through Twelfth Grades. This group participates in challenging Bible studies, ministry and witnessing opportunities, and is involved in missionary ministries in Oxford and beyond.

Presently over 100 adults and 40 children are involved in W.M.U.'s various groups. In the words of Jean B. Finch, present Oxford Baptist W.M.U. Director, upon addressing the women of the church:

[W.M.U. has] a place for you no matter how old you are or how young you are, or when you would like to come, morning or night. We have fun at our meetings, help others in missions, and make lasting friendships.

Another active group at Oxford Baptist Church is Baptist Men. Baptist Men meets on the second Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m. from September to May. Baptist Men is a missions and fellowship group that takes a hands-on approach to missions work. College age and up are welcome to participate. On a local level, Baptist Men carry out missions that assist senior citizens within the community and aid the church in carrying out a number of church-wide projects. Baptist Men also sponsor Royal Ambassadors (R.A.'s), the missions study group for boys which meets on Wednesday nights.

On a state-wide level, Baptist Men are known as an organized and efficient group in responding and offering assistance to those who are in need or have suffered from disasters. From events such as the floods associated with Hurricane Floyd that covered Eastern North Carolina, to the Tsunami victims in Southeast Asia, Baptist Men can be found offering aid. The current president of Oxford Baptist Church's Baptist Men is Robert "Bob" Shope.

In addition to missions-focused groups, fellowship groups are available for the old and young of Oxford Baptist Church alike. Jolly Agers is a fellowship group that





**The fellowship group Jolly Agers stays on the go.**

meets and goes forth from Oxford Baptist Church on a regular basis. This group travels to attractions around the region, and on months for which no trip is planned meets at the church for a covered dish lunch. According to Ursula "Sula" F. Hughes, who organizes Jolly Ager's travels and meetings: "You don't have to be retired to participate; you just need to be able to take time off from work and go!"

The Youth Group at Oxford Baptist Church has traditionally been an active part of the congregation. The Youth Group regularly meets on Sunday nights during the school year. Meetings include Bible study, discussions of relevant youth issues, and discipleship lessons and activities. There are presently approximately 27 members of the Junior High Youth Group and 43 members of the Senior High Youth Group. Monthly mission projects in which Oxford Baptist Youth engage include:

- Collection of items for Area Congregations in Ministry
- Ministry to Homebound and Senior Adults
- Durham Rescue Mission Easter Ministry
- Habitat for Humanity
- Disaster Relief Support
- Hispanic Family Ministry



**Oxford Baptist Church holds Vacation Bible School towards the beginning of summer.**



In addition to these monthly activities, Oxford Baptist Youth annually go on a Summer Mission trip in conjunction with the Music Ministry, assist in Vacation Bible School, and undertake a number of other outreach and ministry activities.

Vacation Bible School is among the number of special events that take place at Oxford Baptist Church. In these week-long classes children learn basics about the Bible, the Christian faith and participate in a host of activities. Vacation Bible School typically takes place in early June, and attracts a number of children from the community as well as those who regularly attend Oxford Baptist Church. The average number of participants for Vacation Bible School in recent years has been from 100 to 125 attendees with approximately 25 teachers.

Governance of Oxford Baptist Church is by democracy: one member, one vote. The deacons are elected from among the congregation on a yearly basis and serve a term of three years. Terms are staggered so that no more than one-third of the deaconate rotates into service in a given year. In addition to the deaconate, church ministry, work and missions are organized and carried out through committees. The Nominating Committee is responsible for making these appointments,<sup>1</sup> and the present church committees are organized as follows:

Administrative/Personnel	Evangelism-Missions	Music
Baptism	Food Services	Nominating
Baptist Foundation	Handyman Ministry	Preschool
Budget-Stewardship-Finance	Historial	Pulpit Supply
Children's Ministry	Interior Decorations	Recreation
Chrismon Tree	Lord's Supper	Technology
Church Flowers	Maintenance, Grounds	& Publications
College	& Equipment	Transportation
Constitution & Bylaws	Media Center	W.E.E. School
Education	Memorials-Scholarship	

These are just some of the many aspects of present church life at Oxford Baptist. Oxford Baptist Church has been and remains a vibrant congregation of doers in which there is a place for individuals of all ages and talents.

## XXI. Conclusion

Oxford Baptist has evolved greatly over her 150 plus years—from a newly formed congregation meeting in the wood-framed structure on Front Street, to the present day established body of believers who worship, support missions, fellowship and carry on a variety of activities out of the present complex on Main Street. Throughout her history, Oxford Baptist Church has clearly been a timely institution.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed accounting the of the organization of Oxford Baptist Church, see the Nominating Committee's Annual Report, *Called to Serve*.

The customs of worship, as described around the time of the church's establishment, in part reflect the mores of a small village in the rural Old South. Though records are missing, surely the congregation and members individually suffered and experienced great loss during the Civil War that divided and ultimately molded the nation. Undoubtedly, members felt the pangs of the Reconstruction Era and its time of scarcity. The return to prosperity in the region and growth following those periods of strife and recovery is evidenced in the congregation's initiating the construction of the second church in 1892. Here, too, a national event, the Wall Street panic of 1893, directly affected Oxford Baptist, causing work to cease on this second structure and the resumption of construction for a period to seem doubtful. Were it not for the bold action of members who put their own homes and well-being at stake, the congregation certainly would have lost the present and third church structure during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Prior to that time, members served the nation in The Great War and subsequently in World War II. The baby boom following the second World War is evidenced in the church's reaching its highest membership to date in the 1950's, as members of that generation were reared in the church. Vietnam and the upheavals of the 1960s were felt as well. The Women's Rights Movement and the changes it caused in society, albeit with some delay, are evidenced in the church's 1976 constitutional amendment allowing women to serve on the Board of Deacons. These and countless other examples show that Oxford Baptist Church has not existed and evolved in a vacuum, devoid of contact with the outside world. On the contrary, members of successive generations have constantly brought their fears and cares with them into worship on Sunday morning.

Beyond being a reflection of national and local events, throughout her history, Oxford Baptist Church and her members have shaped events and been transformers of the world. Church-wide tangible examples include: establishing West Oxford Baptist Church in 1912, aiding in the formation of Delrayno Baptist Church in 1959, hosting several state conventions and providing leadership for the same. Oxford Baptist Church's support of missions on a world-wide and local level by the church proper and in cooperation with various organizations within and beyond the church, and the education and training of successive generations of church members have doubtlessly had countless repercussions beyond Oxford Baptist's doors and into the wider world.

Oxford Baptist Church has certainly been a timely institution, but as the recent Core Values Statement verifies, an institution that has attempted to keep a timeless focus in maintaining Christ as the cornerstone of all endeavors. From a rich and storied past the members Oxford Baptist Church pray for a bright, successful future making known the Word of Our Lord.

## Covenant of Oxford Baptist Church

Adopted September 14, 1912

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Lord; and having by our solemn burial and resurrection with Him in Baptism declared ourselves dead to sin and risen to holiness.

We, the members of the Oxford Baptist Church, do now mutually and joyfully Covenant as one body in Christ:

1. That we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and lovingly warn, exhort and admonish each other as occasion may require.
2. That we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together in the stated services of the Church, but will uphold the public worship of God and the ordinances of His house.
3. That as the light of the world and the salt of the earth we will seek divine guidance that we may deny ungodliness and abstain from worldliness, and will walk circumspectly before the world as witnesses for Christ.
4. That we will cherish and uphold secret prayer and family religion, and will faithfully endeavor by precept and example to train our children and those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
5. That, as stewards of the Lord, we will cheerfully contribute of our means as He has prospered us, and according to the plan recommended by the Church, for the maintenance of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us; for the relief of the destitute; and in co-operation with the Southern Baptist Convention; for the extension of His Kingdom to all the world.
6. That when we remove from this community we will as soon as practicable, unite with another church of the same faith and order where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's word. And may the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of an eternal Covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make us perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the Glory for-ever and ever. Amen.



Oxford Baptist Church Core Values Statement  
Adopted September 19, 1999

**AS CHRISTIANS BELIEVERS, WE AFFIRM:**

God as the Father, Creator, and Redeemer of the world;

The Lordship of Jesus Christ as our Crucified and Risen Savior;

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son; The Holy Spirit as the presence and power of God in Christ in every believer;

Our lifelong calling from Christ to follow Him in Spirit and in Truth;

The authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God;

The command of Christ to make disciples of all nations, to teach all things He has commanded, and to baptize believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;

The Church as the body of Christ and ourselves as loving, free, and responsible members of one body;

Private and corporate worship as the responsibilities and privileges of every believer in Christ and member of His Church;

God as the source of every good gift, spiritual and material, and ourselves as grateful stewards of all our resources in His work and the work of His Church;  
and

While we recognize the power of sin, evil, and death, we affirm that God has defeated them through the saving work of Jesus Christ, our Crucified and Risen Savior.

**AS A CHRISTIAN CHURCH WE VALUE:**

EVANGELISM - We proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ and actively seek to witness to those who do not know Christ as Savior.

MISSIONS – We accept the challenge of the Great Commission and promote the mission of the Church through educating children, youth, and adults and through encouraging personal involvement through giving, praying, and serving

in local, national, and global arenas.

WORSHIP – We value traditional Christ-centered worship based on the life of Jesus, the Christian calendar, and the message of the Scriptures.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP/EDUCATION – We teach and encourage a Biblical standard for ethical, moral, and spiritual behavior in children, youth, and adults.

FELLOWSHIP – We encourage church members to participate in mutual care through sharing burdens, intercessory prayer, and personal acts of ministry to one another. We also promote building personal relationships through social activities both inside and outside the Church.

MINISTRY – As a missionary and evangelistic church, we seek to touch lives and meet needs, providing Christian assistance and counsel to as many people as possible, near and far.

CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNMENT BY DEMOCRACY – This congregation decides by majority vote (One member-one vote) on all matters related to her life and mission according to her constitution and by-laws and guided by the Holy Spirit.

LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY – While the church cooperates with other Baptist organizations she is not under the authority or direction of any outside body.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE – We believe in a free church operating in a free society, neither accepting aid from nor control over any government agency.

BIBLE FREEDOM/SOUL COMPETENCY – Each Christian is given the responsibility and privilege of studying and interpreting Scripture under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM BY IMMERSION – Our church maintains that only those who freely and consciously accept Christ as Savior should be immersed, the mode of baptism which best symbolizes and proclaims the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

COMMUNION – The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of worship whereby Christians, through partaking of the bread and the cup remember and proclaim the sacrificial death of our Lord.

COOPERATION – Oxford Baptist Church shares a common mission with and offers monetary and spiritual support to the following:

*The Flat River Baptist Association;  
The N.C. Baptist State Convention;  
The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; and  
The Southern Baptist Convention.\**

*\*Oxford Baptist Church maintains a fraternal, business relationship with the SBC, a relationship which includes purchasing and using selected literature and programs, participating in insurance and annuity programs for church staff, and also supporting and promoting missionary efforts of the SBC North American Mission Board and the SBC International Mission Board.*

*\*Oxford Baptist Church is not in agreement with nor do we adhere to the following:*

- 1. The SBC's use and promotion of an authoritarian style of Christian leadership rather than the Christ-like model of servant leadership;*
- 2. The SBC's discrimination against those Baptists and Baptist churches not adhering to its prescribed doctrinal statements, positions, or political agendas;*
- 3. The SBC's narrow views of Biblical inspiration (inerrancy) and scriptural interpretation (selective literalism);*
- 4. The SBC's rejection of shared leadership in the home and in the church between male and female.*





BX 6480 095 W37 2005

